

Message Text

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EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, XH

SUBJECT:POSSIBLE EFFECT OF SHARING VOA/RADIO FREE EUROPE
FACILITIES

FOR THE AMBASSADOR FROM ARMITAGE

1. IN DECEMBER WE ASKED FOR YOUR VIEWS ABOUT HOST COUNTRY
REACTIONS IF THE RFE TRANSMITTING FACILITIES IN GLORIA,
PORTUGAL WERE SHUT DOWN AND RFE IN TURN WERE PERMITTED
TO SHARE EXISTING VOA TRANSMITTING FACILITIES.

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2. CONTINGENCY PLANNING IS CONTINUING, BUT THE POSSIBILITY

THAT WE MIGHT HAVE TO INVOKE SOME SORT OF PLAN IS NOW MORE ACUTE. THE NEW PORTUGUESE LEGISLATION ON PRESS AND RADIO IS UNCLEAR REGARDING THE STATUS OF THE GLORIA TRANSMITTERS. WE ARE NOT IN A POSITION TO ASK THE PORTUGUESE DISCRETELY THEIR PRESENT INTERPRETATION OF THE LEGISLATION. CONSEQUENTLY, WE CANNOT PREDICT WHEN OR EVEN IF THE GLORIA TRANSMITTERS MIGHT PASS FULLY UNDER PORTUGUESE CONTROL.

3. CURRENTLY, THERE ARE 18 TRANSMITTERS OPERATING AT THE GLORIA FACILITY. ITS LOSS WOULD REDUCE THE NUMBER OF RFE TRANSMITTERS BY 56 PERCENT. THE LOSS OF TRANSMITTER POWER WOULD BE GREATER - 82 PERCENT. THE REMAINING TRANS-

MITTERS IN GERMANY (OF WHICH ONLY FOUR ARE OF 50 KW POWER OR MORE) WOULD BE WEAK AND VULNERABLE TO HEAVY JAMMING. THE NET EFFECT WOULD BE TO MAKE DELIVERY OF AUDIBLE PROGRAMS ALL BUT IMPOSSIBLE DURING PRIME MORNING AND EVENING LISTENING HOURS. EVEN IF SPANISH GOVERNMENT APPROVAL WERE OBTAINED TO ALLOW TRANSMISSION OF PROGRAMS TO EASTERN EUROPE FROM RL FACILITIES, RFE COULD PROVIDE LITTLE MORE THAN TOKEN SERVICE TO CZECHOSLOVAKIA, POLAND AND BULGARIA DURING THESE HOURS. SERVICE TO HUNGARY AND ROMANIA, WHERE THERE IS NO JAMMING, COULD BE CONDUCTED AT A POOR TO FAIR LEVEL OF EFFECTIVENESS.

4. THESE ARE THE ALTERNATIVES WE FACE IF GLORIA IS SHUT DOWN:

A. WE COULD ASK RFE TO UNDERGO A REDUCTION OF BROADCASTING CAPACITY WHILE PROCEEDING FULL-SPEED WITH CONSTRUCTION OF NEW FACILITIES. LIMITED ADDITIONAL POWER IS EXPECTED TO BE AVAILABLE IN GERMANY IN ABOUT 18 MONTHS, BUT ADEQUATE REPLACEMENT OF THE GLORIA FACILITY IS AT LEAST THREE YEARS OFF. HOWEVER, OVER THE SHORT TERM RFE BROADCASTS WOULD BE REDUCED TO THE LEVEL OF THE EFFECTIVENESS DESCRIBED IN PARAGRAPH 3.

B. WE COULD SEEK TO ARRANGE FOR RFE TO USE VOA TRANSMITTERS LOCATED IN ENGLAND, GREECE, GERMANY, MOROCCO AND LIBERIA DURING PERIODS WHEN THOSE TRANSMITTERS ARE NOT IN NORMAL OPERATION. THUS, RFE COULD PROVIDE SUBSTANTIAL
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SERVICE AT PEAK MORNING AND LATE NIGHT LISTENING PERIODS ONLY. SUCH A SOLUTION WOULD NOT DEPRIVE VOA OF ANY CURRENT TRANSMITTING TIME.

C. WE COULD PERMIT RFE TO UTILIZE VOA OVERSEAS TRANSMITTERS BOTH WHEN THOSE TRANSMITTERS ARE NOT IN NORMAL OPERATION AND DURING PRIME EVENING HOURS (24 TRANSMITTER HOURS ARE PROPOSED). THIS WOULD RESTORE RFE EFFECTIVE-

NESS TO APPROXIMATELY 60 PERCENT OF THE CURRENT LEVEL.
ON THE OTHER HAND, THE QUALITY OF THE VOA SIGNAL WOULD BE
REDUCED DURING PRIME LISTENING HOURS.

5. NONE OF THESE ARE EASY ALTERNATIVES. A SEVERE CURTAIL-
MENT OF RFE BROADCASTING WOULD NOT PER-
MIT RFE TO EFFECTIVELY CARRY OUT ITS LEGISLATIVE MANDATE
TO MAINTAIN COMMUNICATION AND A DIALOG WITH EASTERN EURO-
PEAN PEOPLES CUT OFF FROM NORMAL ACCESS TO INFORMATION.
ON THE OTHER HAND, RFE'S USE OF VOA TRANSMITTER FACILITIES
RAISES A NUMBER OF SERIOUS POLITICAL AND LEGAL QUESTIONS.
SHARING OF FACILITIES COULD PROVIDE THE EXCUSE NEEDED FOR .
EITHER THE USSR OR ONE OF THE EAST EUROPEAN GOVERNMENTS

TO TAKE HOSTILE ACTIONS AGAINST U.S. INFORMATIONAL AND
CULTURAL PROGRAMS, UP TO AND INCLUDING RESUMED JAMMING OF
VOA. MOREOVER, USIA'S GENERAL COUNSEL HAS DETERMINED
THAT THE IMPLEMENTATION OF SHARING ARRANGEMENTS COULD
NECESSITATE NEGOTIATION OF EXCEPTIONS TO OR FULL RENEGO-
TIATION OF THE AGREEMENTS UNDER WHICH VOA PRESENTLY
OPERATES TRANSMITTERS IN THE U.K., GERMANY, GREECE, MOROC-
CO, AND LIBERIA. IN ALL CASES EXCEPT GERMANY, SUCH NEW
AGREEMENTS WOULD INVOLVE THE INITIATION OF RFE TRANSMIS-
SIONS FROM THOSE COUNTRIES. WE DO NOT KNOW FOR CERTAIN
WHAT THE REACTIONS OF THOSE GOVERNMENTS WOULD BE, BUT WE
ANTICIPATE THAT IN AT LEAST SOME CASES, IT WOULD BE
NEGATIVE. FINALLY, THE QUALITY OF THE VOA SIGNAL DURING
PEAK EVENING HOURS WOULD BE ADVERSELY AFFECTED.

6. WE WOULD THEN APPRECIATE YOUR ASSESSMENT OF THE ALTER-
NATIVES TAKING INTO ACCOUNT SOME OF THE CONSIDERATIONS
RAISED ABOVE.

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7. IF IT SHOULD PROVE NECESSARY FOR RFE AND VOA TO
SHARE FACILITIES, EVERY EFFORT WOULD BE MADE TO ENSURE
THAT THERE WOULD BE NO BLURRING OF IDENTITIES AS FAR AS
THE LISTENER IS CONCERNED. RFE WOULD NOT MAKE BACK-TO-
BACK USE OF THE SAME FREQUENCIES AS VOA. THE SHARING OF
VOA FACILITIES WITH RFE WOULD OF COURSE BE IMMEDIATELY
KNOWN TO THE HOST GOVERNMENT. SOME ADDITIONAL SPECIFIC
QUESTIONS YOU MAY WISH TO ADDRESS FOLLOW BELOW:
A. IS IT LIKELY THAT SHARED FACILITIES WOULD CAUSE
THE HOST GOVERNMENT TO RESUME JAMMING AGAINST VOA?
B. IS IT LIKELY THAT THE HOST GOVERNMENT WOULD ENGAGE
IN A STEPPED-UP PROPAGANDA CAMPAIGN AGAINST VOA AND WOULD
THE FACT OF SHARED FACILITIES ADD CREDIBILITY TO SUCH A
CAMPAIGN?
C. WOULD SHARED FACILITIES HAVE A SIGNIFICANTLY ADVERSE

EFFECT ON BILATERAL RELATIONS?

D. WOULD THE HOST GOVERNMENT, EITHER ALONE OR ACTING
IN CONCERT WITH OTHER MEMBERS OF THE BLOC, PUT PRESSURE
ON THIRD COUNTRIES TO SHUT DOWN THOSE VOA TRANSMITTERS
WHICH CARRY RFE BROADCASTS? SISCO

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